

The Bramble.

By George Sinclair.

The Bramble is a cocktail that has seen its way onto almost every UK cocktail bars menu, And although a correct recipe is not always used, it is still a testament to its excellence, of both flavour, and memorable naming, that others are continually trying to improve its simple formula.

"Created in the mid 1980s by Dick Bradsell at Fred's Club in Soho, London."

I have to be honest here, although I worked with Mr. Bradsell, I never actually asked him the story behind the Brambles creation, so I haven't actually verified whether the story is 100% true, regarding the mid 1980s timeframe, and location.

The recipe that I will first list, for the Bramble, was the one that I was taught by Dick Bradsell himself, while working with him at Match; I state this as there is another recipe making the rounds, which I don't think is taken directly from Dick. It is probably just another example of people trying to "improve" this modern classic.

The "Original" Recipe.

Created by Dick Bradsell

1 ½ shots Plymouth Gin
¾ shot fresh lemon juice
½ shot sugar syrup

Build over crushed ice, in a whisky glass. Stir, then pour over ¾ shot of crème de mûre; garnish with a lemon slice and two raspberries.

And that is the way Dick Bradsell showed me how to make them, simple and quick to make. The only complaints were used to get about them were from British customers with a dislike for glasses filled with ice.

The "other" Bramble recipe.

Some fellows choice to use a different recipe than that which is listed above, and

that recipe is generally the same as that which follows:

50ml Gin.
25ml Fresh Lemon Juice.
½ shot sugar syrup

Build over crushed ice, in a tall glass. Stir, then pour over 1 shot of crème de mûre; garnish with a lemon slice and a blackberry.

Some bartenders even shake the gin, lemon and sugar with ice, and then strain it over the crushed ice. And do not even think about pouring frozen gin, as dilution of the crushed ice is a key part of this drink. As the drink melts, the taste changes; It is not meant to be wickedly strong, but should be seen as an amiable tippie, something to ruminate over, rather than just bracing yourself for impact.

The Garnish.

The keen-eyed will notice that the second, "other", recipe for the Bramble couples the blackberry liqueur with a Blackberry as a garnish. However, Dick Bradsell insists that the garnish of choice, his choice as the creator of the drink, is two raspberries and a slice of lemon.

You can do as you wish; And I am sure you will.

The Fix.

Listed in Jerry Thomas' bartenders guide (1862), and subsequently copied by Leo Engel in his work, the Fix is the forefather of the Bramble. As a category, the Fix is regarded as being dead, however it would seem that it in fact lives on, as the Bramble.

Gin Fix.

(Use small bar-glass.)
Take 1 large tea-spoonful of powdered white sugar dissolved in a little water.
2 dashes of Raspberry syrup.
The juice of a quarter of a lemon.
1 wine-glass of Hollands gin.

Fill up the glass two-thirds full of shaved ice, stir thoroughly, and ornament the top with berries in season. Old Tom gin may be used if preferred.

If the Raspberry Syrup were to be floated onto the top of the drink, during the preparation of this recipe, then I would say that it would be a dead-ringer for a Bramble. London dry gin would be preferred rather than the malty taste of Hollands Gin (aka. Jenever).

Canadian Blackberry Fix.

This is exactly the same as the Bramble, except that Canadian whiskey is used instead of Gin; This recipe dates from at least the 1960s. Did Dick Bradsell take the CBF and swap in the Gin? To be frank, it doesn't really matter. A modern Classic was born and for this we should be thankful, and good luck ordering a "Canadian Blackberry Fix" in a bar.

The Bramble is a smart combination of a good, simple recipe with a good simple name.

"The secret to creativity is knowing how to hide your sources." - Albert Einstein.

Tequila Bramble.

1 ½ shots Tequila
¾ shot fresh lime juice
½ shot sugar syrup

Build over crushed ice, in a whisky glass. Stir, then pour over ¾ shot of crème de cassis (blackcurrent liqueur); garnish with a lemon slice and two raspberries.

The Tequila Bramble was recommended to me, in preference to the regular Gin-type Bramble, by my friend Lynnford Jones, and was described by he as being better balanced, and more flavourfull. Its a great drink, I should try to remember it in future, when drinking in cocktail bars. Note how lime is used instead of lemon, this is because the lime compliments the flavours of the tequila and blackberry liqueur better, and you don't need a better reason than that in a culinary artform like cocktail-making.

Can't find "Creme de..."?

Then try a different berry liqueur, its that simple.

Creme de cassis: blackcurrant liqueur.

Creme de framboise: raspberry liqueur.

Creme de mure: blackberry liqueur.

Chambord: proprietary French brand of raspberry liqueur, using a brandy base, and also includes honey.

Tip: Try to choice a dark liqueur, as one of the points of the Bramble is that the berry-flavoured liqueur should cascade down through the crushed ice, as it is served. When done right it is very pleasing, visually.

Videos of a Bramble being made:

<http://www.videojug.com/film/how-to-make-a-bramble-cocktail-2>

The problems that I have with the above recipe, used by Diego Garcia, is that it is not the same balance as the original recipe created by Dick Bradsell, as well as the method of preparation being more long-winded than Dick would go for. However, if Diego is happy with it, and more importantly, his customers are happy with the recipe, then it is, of course, fine.

When floating/ drizzling/ lacing the Creme de Mure onto the top of the Bramble, it is recommended that you first insert the drinking straws, as the straws mess up the cascading effect of the liqueur passing down through the crushed ice.

The author, George Sinclair, operates the thinkingbartender.com website, and blog.

Also, check out his youtube channel: www.youtube.com/thinkingbartender